

Keeping You Posted



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East-West Visits Interest UCC Youth

Youth at First Church of Christ, Congregational in Middletown, CT have written President Reagan and U.S.S.R. Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev to request an exchange visit with Soviet young people.

They got the idea from the board game "Firebreaks," which simulates an international incident that brings the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. to the brink of nuclear war.

The students learned about the potential for worldwide thermonuclear destruction and nuclear weapons stockpiles through the game. "Firebreaks" are actions by either side that can prevent nuclear war.

"One of the best 'firebreaks' is simply communication," remarked a spokesperson for the 19 high school students, aged 13-15.

Talitha Arnold, associate minister at First Church and an advisor to the group, and her co-leader Stu Elliott asked the students what they thought they could do to help prevent nuclear war.

At first the youth doubted if they could make a difference to the two superpowers, but when President Reagan and Secretary Gorbachev mentioned the possibility of exchanges during their Geneva Summit, the students jumped at the idea.

The group also viewed a videotape of Soviet youth discussing their fears of nuclear war, which was produced by Scientists for Social Responsibility. They were encouraged by

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Seminary Students Are Down; Minority, Women's Share Up

There are fewer UCC seminary students this year with a slightly larger portion of minorities and women, the latest survey by the Office for Church Life and Leadership finds.

Total enrollment of UCC seminary students for the 1985-1986 school year is 1,097, down from 1,185 in 1984-1985. Of them, 528 are in the UCC's seven closely-related seminaries, from 587 last year.

Seminary officials attribute the student decline to demographic changes. "Just as col-



W. Evan Golder

"I'm proud of the UCC," declared Rep. Pat Schroeder (D-CO) to the 585 participants at Consultation XI on Parish Ministry, held in Jan. in Orlando, FL. "At a time when society is into form instead of substance, the UCC is trying very hard to deal with the substance."

UCC Exec Says PLO Could Move to Recognize Israel

In what could be a major breakthrough in Arab-Israeli relations, UC Board for World Ministries' Middle East secretary reports that the Palestine Liberation Organization is ready to recognize Israel if the U.S. is willing to accept self-determination for the Palestinians.

Dale Bishop, who is widely traveled in the Middle East and a frequent consultant with the U.S. Department of State, says his information comes from "trusted" contacts both in Washington and overseas. Because of the sensitivity of the subject, the sources have asked to remain unidentified.

The UCBWM executive, who also serves as Middle East secretary for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), claims such a breakthrough could come during talks recently proposed by Jordan's King Hussein between the U.S. and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

Specifically, Dr. Bishop asserts that the PLO is prepared to accept two United Nations resolutions: #242, which recognizes the sovereignty of all states in the region while asking for Israel's return of territories captured in the 1967 war, and #338, which sets up the machinery for negotiations over #242.

Nonrecognition of Israel's right to exist and Palestinian rights to self-determination has been the "key stumbling block" to peace in the Middle East, he maintains. "This is an opportunity we cannot afford to miss."

In related action, UCC president Avery D. Post and Disciples general minister and president John O. Humbert sent a joint telegram to Secretary of State George P. Shultz urging U.S. support for Palestinian self-determination and for a summit meeting. The church officials said they were encouraged by the preliminary work of Assistant Secretary of State for the Middle East and South Asia Richard Murphy to bring all sides together.

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God Leads Us in Triumph

By Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe

When our diabetic daughter has an insulin reaction during the night, she does not wake up in the morning. It is past her time to rise, so we shake her till she awakens. Her eyes are glazed; she cannot say her name. We pour concentrated glucose gel down her throat. In a few minutes she is just fine and gets herself ready for school. This frightening experience has happened three times in the last four years, and can recur any morning.

Before insulin was discovered in 1921, diabetics inevitably lapsed into coma, then death from uncontrolled blood sugar. The first patients to receive insulin responded so dramatically, a medical historian writes, "it was difficult to find words and images to describe the transformation insulin wrought. Metaphors of salvation and resurrection were never far from writers' and diabetics' consciousness." One physician wrote, "By Christmas of 1922, I had witnessed so many near resurrections that I realized I was seeing enacted before my very eyes Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones" (Michael Bliss, *The Discovery of Insulin*, University of Chicago, 1982, p. 164).

Near-resurrections sparkle like sequins in life's fabric: An alcoholic finds hope after hitting bottom; a woman crippled for years,

through persistent prayer, rounds of surgery and painful therapy, walks again and drives her car; a troubled marriage revives; a widowed or divorced person falls in love and receives the gift of a new life; a workaholic survives a heart attack to reorder his life.

We know from the gospels, as well as intuition, God's gracious hand is upon us in these times. Jesus' ministry of healing and forgiveness was nothing less than the birth of God's reign here and now. He said, "If it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20). Near-resurrections foreshadow that day when God "will swallow up death forever, and . . . wipe away tears from all faces" (Isaiah 25:8).

Foreshadowings bring joy, not unmixed with pain. There will be more insulin reactions from low blood sugar, more blurred vision when the sugar soars. More failures must be endured; more griefs will be borne. Jesus understood his blessed healings do not exempt us from suffering. He wept at the side of dead Lazarus: Jesus would raise him, but Lazarus would die again and the sisters again would mourn.

The raising of Lazarus, nonetheless, points to Easter. Jesus' resurrection was cru-

cially different from our near-resurrections. Paul wrote, "We know that Christ being raised from the dead will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him" (Romans 6:9). Nor over us, holding fast to the knowledge that our signs of life come from the hand of the God who raised Christ. Remembering our hope—our final rising to union with Christ beyond this life in glory.

Rejoice in every sign of resurrection. Each one points to the Risen Christ. So "thanks be to God, who in Christ always leads us in triumph, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of God everywhere" (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe is minister of worship and stewardship at Church of the Apostles UCC, Lancaster, PA.

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Charles W. Cooper, Jr. is now assistant to UCC president Avery D. Post. The ordained minister's new duties include serving on the Executive Council and its special appeals committee, and representing the president's office in ecumenical relations. Mr. Cooper was formerly the Stewardship Council's associate for mission interpretation, 1980-1985; mission information secretary, 1966-1979, and editor for promotion, 1962-1965.

Dorothy Robinson, who was based in Flagstaff, AZ, is now New England associate for the Office for Church Life and Leadership.

Priorities Report

Family Life

First graders at First Congregational UCC, Janesville, WI, get a three-session introduction to communion each year. Sharing breakfast before worship on Worldwide Communion Sunday and evening meals on the two Sundays before it, the children and their families discuss what meals mean in their homes, learn about the Last Supper and other meals Jesus ate, see the sacristy where communion utensils are kept and do hands-on activities like drawing pictures of meals, baking bread to be used in the service and setting the communion table.

Church members in the Penn Southeast Conference gathered recently at Fernbrook Center, Pottstown, for "Children in Our Society," a seminar sponsored by the conference's life issues task force featuring a filmstrip titled "Every Child is My Child." Among the topics of discussion were questions facing parents and other people of faith in a society that places high value on performance and achievement, even among children.

Spiritual Renewal

People who go to meetings and rehearsals at St. John's (Hain's) Reformed Church in Wernersville, PA have been praying together regularly since Dec. Whenever there are evening activities at the church, all participants gather for a 10-minute "common prayer" service at 7:20. "It's very well attended," says Gary Marks, the church's director of music and education. He says members often pray for God to guide the evening's activities and the direction of the congregation.

Since 1983, clergy in the Chicago Metropolitan Association of the Illinois Conference have been taking part in pre-Advent and pre-Lent "retreats for renewal" sponsored by the association's committee on spiritual life. Noting that participants are increasing in number and diversity, area conference minister Delbert J. Schrag says, "It's not just the 'spiritual guys' getting involved."

Justice and Peace

After studying Central American justice and peace issues for nearly two years, members of

First Congregational Church in Flagstaff, AZ formed a "Christian base community" to gain closer contact with Central Americans and their concerns. Besides its own weekly studies of the Bible and theology, the group has sponsored public events and forum series on Central America, started a sister relationship with a church in San Salvador and collected medical and school supplies for the people of the region. A tour of Central America is planned for June.

Youth/Young Adult Ministries

A paraplegic who thought drinking and driving would never harm him spoke at Brookside Congregational Church, Manchester, NH, in a Dec. program on children and drugs. Attended by about 100 students and parents from the church and the community, the program also featured two members of the local Students Against Drunk Driving group. A similar program in Feb. focused on children and drugs; one in Mar. will deal with children and cults.

OCIS Meeting Backs Tax Act

A bill that would radically change the nation's tax laws received strong support from a variety of grassroots groups at a recent meeting convened in Washington, DC by the UCC's Office for Church in Society.

The Tax Reform Act (HR 3838), currently before the Senate Finance Committee, was endorsed in the form passed by the House by about 100 representatives of church, anti-poverty and other groups.

Participants decided to mount a campaign opposing any changes in the bill that would continue corporate tax loopholes or reduce increases voted by the House for personal deductions, exemptions and the level and range of earned income credits.

They also rejected any addition to the legislation of a "business transfer tax," which would be applied at each stage in the production-distribution-retail chain. Because its costs would ultimately be passed on to consumers, the tax could wipe out any gains made by the poor from other portions of a

new tax law, the groups warned.

During the consultation, OCIS met with a group of corporate representatives who are part of the Fair Tax Campaign. They agreed to oppose tax increases as a solution to the Federal budget deficit until reform has been accomplished and to back provisions in the tax bill that cut taxes and increase credits for low-income people. They also asserted that the highest rate of income taxed should not exceed 38%, as voted by the House.

In another meeting, OCIS staff and a dozen other mainline policy advocates made a commitment to work for changes in parts of the Tax Reform Act that could hurt church pension participants and pension boards.

Following discussions with denominational pension board consultants, the social action people agreed to press for continued tax-exempt status for church pension boards and for maintenance of current levels for contributions by church pension participants to an IRA account.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Peace and justice, ecumenism and aging ministries are upcoming event topics.

"Central America Week," when churches are asked to concentrate on peace-making in the region, has been set for Mar. 16-24 this year. Call the Inter-Religious Task Force on Central America, 212-870-3383.

"Religion, Spirituality and Aging" will be the topic of a special program to be held Mar. 23-24 in San Francisco by the American Society on Aging and National Interfaith Coalition on Aging. \$105 for non-ASA members. Call ASA at 415-543-2617.

The National Workshop on Christian Unity is slated for Apr. 14-17 in Hartford, CT, sponsored by the National Ecumenical Officers Association. Send \$55 to the workshop, 1755 Stanley St., New Britain, CT 06053.

OCIS Offers Sabbatical

UCC ministers who would like to spend a three- or four-month sabbatical carrying out public policy advocacy in Washington, DC, have been asked to contact the Office for Church in Society.

Preference will be given to the pastor or faculty member who is available from May-July and has expertise in foreign or military policies, tax reform, programs affecting the poor, refugee policies, civil rights, church and state questions or international development.

Write DC office director Jay Lintner by Mar. 24 indicating background, why the experience is of interest and what issues are of greatest concern at OCIS, UCC, 110 Maryland Ave., NE, Washington, DC 20002.

Strategies for churches, schools and families to act for peace and justice will be the focus of a June 16-20 program at Eden Theological Seminary, St. Louis, co-sponsored by the Institute for Peace and Justice. Tuition is \$100. Contact James McGinnis, 4144 Lindell, #400, St. Louis, MO 63108.

OBITUARIES

DERRITH L. MATTHEWS, 64, an active 34-year UC Board for World Ministries missionary to Japan, died Jan. 17 in Tokyo from cancer. Mrs. Matthews provided visitor services for the Council of Cooperation from 1966, in addition to teaching and editing. Earlier, she served in China for four years.

MARGARET P. CHILDS, 83, retired 41-year UCBWM missionary to Angola, died Jan. 14 in Seattle, WA after a long illness.

OLIVE M. BUCHER, 102, retired 36-year UCBWM missionary to China who wrote a book about her experiences there, died Jan. 25 in Coopersburg, PA.

MARIE R. IRWIN, 75, retired 14-year UCBWM missionary to Japan, died Jan. 20 in Claremont, CA after a heart attack.

RECOMMENDED

SANCTUARY: THE NEW UNDERGROUND RAILROAD is a graphic account of the sanctuary movement through participants' eyes. Authors Denny Golden and UCC minister Michael McConnell parallel the movement with fugitive slave harboring during the abolition period. \$7.95 from Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY 10545.



Peter Kramer

Youth from First Church during press conference announcing their request to be part of a U.S.-Soviet youth exchange.

Youth Exchanges

From page 1

the Soviet youths' feelings, which were similar to their own.

Another exchange between U.S. and Soviet youth is in the works. UC Board for World Ministries and the UCC's Office for Church in Society plan to take a delegation of 20-40 UCC youth to the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe June 26-July 17.

OCIS has sent notices to each conference seeking mature high school and college youth affiliated with the UCC.

"It is important to bring another generation into the East-West dialogue," explains Kenneth R. Ziebell, UCBWM's associate for East-West relations.

The delegation will visit Moscow, Leningrad, Berlin and Prague, focusing on youth dialogue, Christian dialogue and peace.

A third contingent of 26 UCC youth from the UCC's Kansas-Oklahoma Conference plan to visit the Soviet Union Aug. 13-28, meeting young people in Moscow, Leningrad and Sochi. The trip is their way of implementing the justice and peace and youth/young adult ministries priorities, explains Kevin Poidevin-Brown, associate pastor of Plymouth Congregational Church, Lawrence, KS.

Clergywomen's Group Plans July Meeting

The Network for UCC Clergywomen will hold its first "official" national meeting at Macalester College in St. Paul, MN July 15-17. While the group has gathered before in regional and national meetings, this is the first time it has a structure and steering committee in place.

Focus of the gathering will be new ideas and patterns for worship under the theme of "She Stood Up and Praised God," Carol Joyce Brun, UCC secretary, will keynote.

The 200-member network is open to all UCC clergy and laity. For information about the national meeting, contact Nancy M. Doty, P.O. Box 154, Tipton, MI 49287.

Seminarians Statistics From page 1

more in the way of scholarships and financial assistance. "A school like Eden, which was supported by the national church until 1974, did not have an endowment fund," he explains. "Now, we have a lot of catching up to do in a little time." Eden's relatively new fund comprises only about 15% of income.

Another change is that the average age of a seminary student today is 33, reports Will Ashley, director of recruitment and assistant dean of students at UCC-related Andover-Newton Theological School, where enrollment slid from 169 to 134. "Ten, 20 years ago, you hit the college campuses to recruit. Now, for most students, this is a second career move." Dorms and housing designed for newlyweds are often unsuitable for the larger families of today's students, he adds.

While these factors affect minorities, they have continued to inch forward in both number and percentage share. There are 78 minority UCC students in seminaries this year, 7.1% of all seminarians from the denomination. Last year, the figures were 76 and 6.4% and in 1981-1982 60 and 5.3%.

The rise reflects the fact that more Black churches are seeking seminary-trained ministers, explains Joseph M. Copeland, head of the UCC's Ministers for Racial and Social Justice. "Only problem is that we have many smaller, rural churches that cannot afford to support a formally-trained minister, and so the ministers have to have some other means of support." He believes the merging of smaller churches might help.

UCC women seminarians account for 46.4% of students in 1985-1986, compared with 45.2% in 1984-1985. But their numbers declined from 536 to 509. Placement difficulties may have contributed to the decrease, says Marilyn M. Breitling, Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society executive.



Mendle Adams and William Best, pastors of UCC churches in McPherson and Little River, KS, examine their churches' contributions to Oxfam America's Tools for Peace and Justice in Central America project. Nicaraguan farmers are now using the equipment collected on the Boston-to-San Francisco caravan.

CRJ Challenges 'Injustice' In Darryl Hunt Conviction

"Based on our preliminary investigation, it appears that a gross racial injustice has been done in the recent conviction of Darryl E. Hunt for murder and rape in Winston-Salem, NC," charges Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., executive director of the UCC's Commission for Racial Justice.

CRJ has dispatched an investigator to Winston-Salem to follow up on new information it has uncovered. CRJ's Southern regional office will be responsible for monitoring developments in the case.

A former Ku Klux Klansman's testimony helped convict Mr. Hunt, a Black Winston-Salem resident, to a life sentence for the

murder and rape of a white woman. The ex-Klansman was unable to identify Hunt until his picture appeared in local newspapers.

A delegation of Winston-Salem citizens traveled to the Commission for Racial Justice's New York office and asked CRJ to conduct an investigation of the Hunt case and the Forsyth County District Attorney's office.

Dr. Chavis urges UCC members to "pray that justice will be done in this case, write letters of support to Darryl and the Hunt family (c/o CRJ, 4904 Professional Ct., Rm. 204, Raleigh, NC 27609) and become local volunteers for racial justice in this case."

UCBHM to Involve Disciples

Responding to the UCC's new partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the executive committee of UC Board for Homeland Ministries has taken steps to include Disciples representation at future UCBHM meetings.

Meeting Jan. 26-27 in Phoenix, AZ, the executive committee voted to invite the Disciples' Division of Homeland Ministries to send one or more representatives who would have voice without vote to UCBHM's Apr. board of directors meeting. It also called for the drafting of amendments to UCBHM bylaws and rules to allow Disciples representatives to vote at future meetings of the board and of UCBHM's corporate members.

In other matters, the committee:

- *Approved, in principle, UCBHM sponsorship of a 1988 National Youth Event and agreed to consult with conferences on site and date.

- *Elected Stephen L. Sterner, pastor of Plymouth United Church in Spring, TX, to

be secretary for church development in the division of evangelism and local church development. He begins work Apr. 1.

- *Approved loans totaling \$964,500 to seven churches in the Florida, Rocky Mountain, Michigan and Washington-North Idaho Conferences—three for site acquisition; four for construction of buildings.

- *Adopted UCBHM's 1986 budget in new format reflecting the agency's realignment into three divisions and designed for greater clarity and usefulness to conferences and local churches.

- *Called for creation of a committee to formulate "goals, objectives and budget projections" for UCBHM's work from 1987-1991.

SEND NEWS ideas and queries to KEEPING YOU POSTED, Office of Communications, UCC, 105 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016.

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